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REPORT OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF EXPERTS OF TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND PLANNING

Addis Ababa, 21 to 24 May 1984

A. ORGANIZATION

1. The extraordinary Meeting of Experts of transport, communications and planning on the Inter-agency Co-ordinating Committee report on the preparatory activities for the feasibility study on the Regional African Satellite Communication System was held at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 21 to 24 May 1984, in accordance with the decision of the fourth Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning held in Conakry, Guinea, from 7 to 11 February 1984.

B. PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

2. Representatives of the following member States participated in the meeting: Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, the Upper Volta, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Cuba was represented in an observer capacity. Representatives of the following bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations and African inter-governmental organizations also attended the meeting as observers: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), African Posts and Telecommunications Union (UAPT), Organization of African Unity (OAU), Pan-African Telecommunications Union (PATU) and Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa (URTNA).

C. OPENING OF THE MEETING

3. Speaking on behalf of Mr. Yusuf Ahmed, Minister of Transport and Communications of Socialist Ethiopia and COPWE Central Committee Member, Mr. Amare Hibistu referred to the history of the project and pointed to the significance and far-reaching consequences of the meeting which would give the required directives and assistance to the Inter-agency Co-ordinating Committee. He referred to the various applications and possible uses of a satellite system, which he considered to be only a component of a wider regional telecommunications system. He further emphasized that the contribution of the regional projects towards promoting development of the rural and remote areas in Africa would be decisive and indeed historic.

4. The representative of the Minister further stated that satellite communications was not a new phenomenon for Africa, what was needed was a system tailored to the specific requirements of the participating countries.

5. In conclusion, he referred to pressing telecommunications problems in Africa and reminded the meeting that constructive and concrete results were expected.

6. In his opening statement, Mr. Aly Bocar Cissé, current Chairman of the Meeting of Experts of transport, communications and planning, expressed his gratitude to Ethiopia on behalf of all participants for the welcome and hospitality extended to them and for the services provided by ECA. He expressed the regret of his Government for not having been able to accommodate the present meeting. The Chairman referred to the Lagos Plan of Action and said that the objectives of the programme of the second phase of the Transport and Communications Decade would be severely affected if the work done during the meeting did not yield fruitful results.

7. He appealed to the meeting to decide, once and for all, on the arrangements to be made for the implementation of the feasibility study, a project whose importance no one could ignore.

8. In his opening statement, the Assistant Secretary-General of OAU, Mr. Paul O. Etiang, compared Africa's telecommunications network with those of other developing regions and observed that this vital sub-sector has not been able to provide the necessary support for economic and social development of the African continent. He referred to the rural areas and called upon the experts to devise a cost-effective method of extending communications facilities to rural and remote areas on the basis of priorities determined by the government concerned. He was therefore sure that the meeting would share his view that a Regional African Satellite Communications System holds the key to the rapid development of communications in the continent and pointed out that this type of system was cost-effective and eliminated the constraints imposed by distance inherent in other systems.

9. He mentioned that the role of African organizations in the implementation of the project needed to be clarified. Since this was a crucial issue the meeting should carefully guide the IACC.

10. The Assistant Secretary-General informed the meeting that the IACC had updated the terms of reference of the feasibility study and had adopted a strategy for the mobilization of funds. In this context he stressed the need for unity of purpose and action on the part of both African countries and donor institutions or countries. He reported that there was still some tendency for parallel and unilateral action on the project to those of the IACC.

11. He made reference to the expert field missions already undertaken and finally Mr. Etiang expressed the hope that participants would clearly state how the feasibility study should be undertaken.

12. The representative of ECA read a statement from the Executive Secretary who had been unable to attend the extraordinary Meeting of Experts. He welcomed participants to Africa Hall and said it was once more ECA's privilege to host this experts meeting after the recent one held in Conakry.

13. He reiterated the African Governments' concern about the dispersal of scarce resources associated with the many competing satellite projects put forward a few years ago by a number of organizations concerned. Therefore great efforts had been made in the past two years to co-ordinate and give

direction to all activities connected with the proposed establishment of an African satellite communications system and to find a common basis for the four prefeasibility studies.

14. He recalled that in the Resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.83/26 adopted by the Cairo Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning in March 1983, it was noted with satisfaction that the various on-going study projects could be harmonized and the Inter-agency Co-ordinating Committee was called upon to finalize the feasibility study on the integrated satellite project as soon as possible and report to the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning.

15. He also recalled that since it was not possible for the fourth Conference of Ministers to take the IACC report, an extraordinary Meeting of Experts had been called to examine the report and take decisions on behalf of their Ministers on the implementation of the feasibility study.

16. In particular he said that since the Cairo Conference of Ministers, three milestones of accomplishment had been achieved: terms of reference had been adopted, preparatory missions had been sent out by the IACC to sensitize member countries and funding sources for the feasibility study had been identified.

17. Close to 40 OAU member States had associated themselves with the Regional African Satellite Communication System and approved the terms of reference for the feasibility study.

18. Finally, the ECA representative observed that the feasibility study could go ahead and that this meeting offered an opportunity for each member country to express its views on its national and regional communications needs with respect to the regional satellite system being studied and on the implementation of this important project.

19. Mr. Jean Jipguep, Deputy Secretary-General of ITU read a message from the ITU Secretary-General who had been unable to attend the Meeting of Experts. He welcomed participants and thanked the Government and people of Socialist Ethiopia for their warm welcome.

20. Turning to the subject of the meeting - Regional African Satellite Communications System -he reiterated that with high power satellites operating with very small earth stations, small number of circuits and low power consumption, this system, which was also insensitive to distance would bring good quality telecommunications within the economic reach of rural and remote area residents. He further pointed out that improvement in conventional terrestrial systems technology had made it possible to provide good quality terrestrial service to the rural areas where fuel supplies were often difficult to provide and maintenance resources rare.

21. He stressed that these attractive objectives can only be reached if the design criteria of the systems to be provided were primarily and deliberately oriented towards meeting the needs of all the communities of each country which had obtained virtually no services to date.

22. He observed that the study activity under consideration was a multi-disciplinary one and had a very large scope. It therefore required the positive and active collaboration of all organizations - subregional, regional and international - in the execution of specific tasks as determined by their competence and the mandate given to them by their members.

23. The magnitude of the study and the long-term implications for telecommunications development in Africa called for extreme prudence on the part of governments to examine all technological and economic options before entering into any commitments.

24. Finally, he informed the meeting that, in accordance with resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.83/26, ITU was pleased and honoured to assume the role of lead agency for the execution of the feasibility study. He also confirmed his intention to collaborate effectively with all the other members of the IACC, each of which has undeniably a unique and positive contribution to make towards the success of the project.

Election of officers (agenda item 2)

25. As the meeting was extraordinary, it was agreed to retain the bureau of the fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts of the following countries:

Chairman:	Guinea
First Vice-Chairman:	Morocco
Second Vice-Chairman:	Zambia
Rapporteur:	Congo

Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 3)

26. After a long debate by the experts on the provisional agenda proposed by the secretariat, the following agenda was adopted:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of the agenda
4. Report on the activities of the Inter-agency Co-ordinating Committee
5. Procedures and organization of the feasibility study and setting up of the Regional African Satellite Communication System:
   (a) Preparatory activities
   (b) Procedures and modalities for feasibility study execution and setting up of the Regional African Satellite Communications System
   (c) Strategy for resource mobilization
6. Any other business.

D. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Report on the activities of the Inter-Agency Co-ordinating Committee (agenda item 4)

27. The Chairman of the Inter-Agency Co-ordinating Committee introduced the Committee's report in two parts:

(i) Report of the Inter-Agency Co-ordinating Committee on the Regional African Satellite Communication System document TRANSCOM/CM/IV/INF.2/Corr.1

(ii) Addendum to the Report of the Inter-Agency Co-ordinating Committee (IACC) on Regional African Satellite Communications System document IACC/WP/No(7) 1.84.

28. In his introduction of both reports, he outlined the legal framework of the activities of the IACC in accordance with resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.83/26.

29. He pointed out that the report also contained the activities undertaken by individual members of the IACC.

30. In particular, the IACC, at its fourth meeting held in Geneva, adopted the Terms of Reference taking into consideration views and comments received from the majority of OAU member States. However, the Committee, at its seventh meeting, updated the Terms of Reference to incorporate the views of all members of the IACC. It should be noted that the substance of the terms of reference is identical to the one sent to member States for their comments. He further pointed out that preparatory missions were undertaken by ITU on behalf of the IACC to OAU member States to sensitize member countries. As a result of the mission close to 40 OAU member States had shown their interests in the Regional African Satellite Communications System and had approved the terms of reference for the feasibility study.

31. The Committee, at its sixth meeting held in Conakry, elected OAU Chairman, ECA Vice-Chairman, PATU Technical Secretariat and ADB Financial Adviser and ITU Lead Agency, in accordance with resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res83/26.

32. Furthermore, the Committee also considered the question of resource mobilization and created a sub-committee composed of OAU, ECA, PATU, UAPT and ITU to develop a strategy for mobilization of finds; the strategy was adopted by the Committee.

33. The Chairman of the IACC noted finally that parallel to the implementation of the Cairo Resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.83/26, UAPT project continues to make progress.

34. During the discussion on this agenda item several participants asked for further clarification on the difficulties experienced by IACC in its effort to negotiate a common approach to the feasibility study. Participants wanted to know in particular whether other parallel activities were still going on and how the various preparatory activities were to be integrated.

35. Following the questions raised, the organizations concerned answered as follows:

(i) The representative of UAPT reassured the participants that his organization agreed to co-operate on a single, unified project. To dispell any musunderstandings and distrust in UAPT activities he explained that UAPT (a) was participating in the project on the basis of the Cairo resolution although this resolution described the role of UAPT as that of an ordinary consultant rather than a fully fledged participant (b) supported the revised terms of reference; (c) parallel activities referred only to the prefeasibility stage; (d) agreement of intent endorsed by Council of Ministers of UAPT was merely a way of obtaining firm commitment to the project from member States, which certain members of the IACC had already done in their own manner. Finally the UAPT representative indicated that his organization had received clear directives from its Council of Ministers to make sure that all the studies were integrated.

(ii) The ITU representative explained that preparatory activities were undertaken by the ITU in pursuance of Cairo resolution ECA/UNTACDA/ Res.83/26. In response to the query raised by the meeting on ITU's mandate to distribute terms of reference to member States before they were fully cleared by the IACC, he said that ITU as a lead agency felt it should take the initiative. He informed the meeting that ITU was at the disposal of member States to do everything it was requested.

36. The meeting observed that it was impossible to amend and adopt the report since it was an IACC document. However, corrections to the report should be submitted to the IACC. Finally, the meeting agreed to take note of the report in the IACC activities.

Procedures and organization of the feasibility study and setting up of the Regional African Satellite Communication System

(agenda item 5)

(a) Preparatory activities

37. The representative of ITU presented the report on the preparatory missions conducted by ITU. He underlined that the report was a document for information only. He mentioned that the majority of countries had already indicated their interests in the project.

38. The representative of PATU pointed out that the report did not mention all the preparatory activities undertaken by his organization geared towards the implementation of the regional project.

39. He gave an account of the activities of his organization, in particular the implementation of a specialized training programme in collaboration with the European Space Agency and certain European countries; ongoing negotiations with India in the fields of training and project study and development, as well as with the Arab Telecommunications Union, ARAB-SAT, Brazil, USSR and contacts made with Arab League financing institutions.

40. The Chairman indicated that all the corrections to be made to the report on preparatory activities should be referred to the ITU representative.

41. UAPT, in view of its mandate, had also undertaken a number of activities towards the implementation of the project, which were not indicated in the document presented. The representative of UAPT pointed out that the report on preparatory activities does not reflect the latest state of affairs negotiated by his organization.

42. It was also learnt during the debate that some countries were already preparing data for the feasibility study and wished to be informed about a definite contact address to which such data would be forwarded.

43. In his summary, the Chairman said again that the report of the preparatory mission was for information only and pointed out that there was no common report of the IACC on this subject available.

44. Finally he suggested to study the up-dated terms of reference (TOR) presented by the IACC, although many participants requested to send them directly to their countries for consideration.

(b) Procedures and modalities for feasibility study execution and setting up of the Regional African Satellite Communication System (agenda item 5)

45. The meeting decided to discuss three written proposals on the implementation of the feasibility study submitted by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Panafrican Telecommunication Union (PATU) on behalf of African organizations concerned and Senegal. The participants concerned then introduced their papers.

46. Senegal took the floor and introduced two contributions:

(a) Contribution to the discussion on the establishment of a Regional Satellite Communications System for Africa;

(b) Proposals with respect to a methodology for carrying out feasibility study.

As far as the establishment of a Regional Satellite Communications System for Africa was concerned, after taking note of the various on-going projects it was found that:

All the studies undertaken had one characteristic in common: they were all being performed either by international organizations or institutions (ITU, UNESCO, ECA) or regional or subregional bodies (OAU, PATU, UAPT).

None of the studies therefore, is under the direct control of any of the African Telecommunications Administrations.

Senegal next insisted on the need to give further thought to the procedure for establishing the satellite system in order to enable these administrations to acquire more effective control over the conduct of the on-going studies.

Before thanking all the institutions concerned (ITU, OAU, ECA, UNESCO, UAPT, PATU) the speaker pointed out that the meeting should settle down to the task of studying all the alternatives which would enable African countries and their Telecommunications Administrations responsible for telecommunications development planning to assume a leading role in the conduct of the studies. The reason for this being that African Administrations should be the main investors in this project if it is indeed to be implemented.

Concerning Senegal's contribution to the discussion on methodology, after having stated that this project, though ambitious was comparable to other major telecommunications projects which were already underway or had been implemented in other parts of the world, the speaker outlined the various phases of project implementation before proposing a definite methodology.

This methodology consisted of:

1. Confirmation by African countries of their interest in continuing the feasibility studies, by the signing of an agreement of intent.

2. Establishment of an Interim Executive Committee (IEC) composed of representatives of all signatory countries. The IEC would be directly responsible for all the studies related to this project and would work hand in hand with all African of International organizations or institutions who wished to contribute towards the accomplishment of its objectives.

3. If it was decided to set up this system, the signing of an agreement relating to the construction and operation of the system, which would give a final definition of the legal obligations binding the various parties as well as the their financial obligations.

4. Preparation of an agreement relating to the establishment of a Regional African Satellite Communications Organization. This organization would be responsible for the technical administrative and commercial management of the system.

47. In his final conclusions he underlined that development depended on contributions made by African countries themselves with the help of others.

48. Presenting the joint PATU - URTNA - UAPT proposal, the representative of PATU stated that the proposal was aimed at setting up an operational structure for carrying out the feasibility study. This was in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 2 b) of resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.83/26. He stressed the importance attributed in the proposed structure to the effective participation of national experts and the continuous monitoring of the project by the latter as well as the active role to be played by African specialized institutions which

would also facilitate the participation of subregional organizations such as ECOWAS, SADAC, UDEAC, etc. He emphasized that PATU had no doubts about the effectiveness of the Inter-Agency Co-ordinating Committee and did not therefore question its continued existence. As far as the financing of the project was concerned, he expressed the opinion that if African Organizations took on more responsibility in terms of handling the project, it would be easier to acquire the necessary funds. He then gave details of the organizational chart of the proposed structure.

49. The representative of UAPT in his comments supported PATU and referred to the Final Act of Lagos, underlining the importance of the political considerations, and the need for all parties concerned to exercise control over the project. In his conclusion he appealed to the meeting to decide as to who undertakes the feasibility study and how.

50. This was followed by the introduction of the ITU proposal by the Deputy Secretary-General of ITU. He said the project was based on the Cairo resolution and will be implemented in two phases, which are to be seen completely separate as far as ITU is concerned. Phase one being the feasibility study and phase two the actual project. ITU as lead agency will be involved only in phase one, after which the African decision mechanism will automatically take over. He mentioned that the cost of the feasibility study estimated at $6 million is of the order of 10 per cent of the ITU annual global technical co-operation programme.

51. He further referred to the substantial work at national level and appealed to the meeting not to underestimate the requirements of the network complementing the satellite component. With respect to the lead agency he said that its role should not be interpreted as executing agency. He felt, that while decisions always remain with the countries, there should be one accountable agency. In his final comments he referred to the existing legal framework, which required a multilateral or bilateral agreement before the feasibility study could be implemented. An organization could not implement a project on the basis of a resolution only.

52. Several participants discussed the previous presentations, in particular the pros and cons of the competence African organizations or African telecommunications administrations themselves undertaking the feasibility study. This lead to a general discussion in which some participants felt that although the Ministers of Transport, Communication and Planning had no doubt that the African Regional Organizations should play a vital role in the implementation of the project they thought it wise that the role of lead agency should go to ITU and would therefore find it difficult to question the decision already taken by their Ministers. Others felt that it was within the competence of the Meeting, in view of the mandate from the fourth Conference of Ministers of Transport, Communications, and Planning, Conakry to decide as to who will have the responsibility for the conduct of the study and inform the Ministers.

53. On the role of each member of the Inter-agency Co-ordinating Committee, the meeting felt that the African organizations concerned should participate fully in all stages of the execution of the project. It was also felt by some participants that the proposal on the methodology was in some respects similar and that they could be merged. Some felt that a drafting committee should be set up to undertake the job, others felt that the IACC should be asked to complete its assignment.

54. Despite of all the suggestions made, there was a divergence of opinions concerning the interpretation of part of Resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.83/26 (agenda item 4) and the mandate conferred by the Conakry meeting (paragraphs 40 and 52 of the report of the Conakry meeting). As a result the meeting came to a deadlock.

55. At the final stages of the debate on this item of the agenda, Mr. Etiang, Assistant Secretary-General of OAU conveyed a message from the OAU Secretary-General, Mr. Peter Onu. He observed that what was responsible for the difficulties of the meeting was the crisis of confidence and the suspicion among members of the Inter-agency Co-ordinating Committee. As a result, he pointed out the external interests had willingly or unwillingly been drawn into the deliberations of the IACC. This was understandible in view of external political, commercial and financial implications of the proposed project.

56. He reiterated that the mandate of the fourth Conference of Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning to the Experts was to consider the report from the IACC on its activities and to take a decision on it. He stressed that the meeting of Experts was not mandated to examine the Cairo Resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.83/26.

57. With respect to the preparation of the meeting of experts he said that the IACC had agreed and adopted unanimously the up-dated terms of reference and that the new terms of reference will be distributed to member countries along with the old text asking for their comments to be fedback to the IACC. While the mobilization of funds had not been discussed in the meeting, the strategy outlined in the document presented was also agreed upon by the IACC. Mr. Etiang ended his statement by saying that the IACC had not had enough time to finalize discussion on the distribution of project feasibility tasks among members of the Committee and, consequently stated that the Committee of Experts accepts the recommendation of the IACC that it be allowed more time to finalize discussion of the matter and report at a later date.

58. The Chairman expressed appreciation for the Secretary-General's message and recommended that the Meeting of Experts take note of the message. The Chairman observed that the IACC had achieved some success inspite of their difficulties. It was only on the issues of assignment of tasks that the Committee was not able to complete its work.

59. Finally, it was agreed that the IACC should on the basis of three contributions introduced complete its work on agenda item 5b procedures and modalities for feasibility study execution and setting up of the Regional African Satellite Communications System and circulate a comprehensive report on its activities to member States for consideration within the next three months.

60. The present meeting taking into consideration:

a. The difficulties encountered by the experts;

b. The importance of the project and the urgency to take a decision on this matter.

Requests

The Chairman of the 4th Conference of Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning to convene an extraordinary meeting of African Ministers of telecommunications with a view to take a final decision.

Adoption of the report

61. The draft report of the extraordinary Inter-governmental Meeting of Experts of Transport, Communications and Planning was introduced by its Chairman. The ECA secretariat took note of all corrections made by the participants and the report was adopted as amended.

Closure of the meeting

62. No other matters were discussed and in view of the time constraint the Chairman closed the meeting after the adoption of the report.